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ABSTRACT

Because of great differences in reading ability among junior-high students, various forms of individualized reading instruction can be used successfully to the benefit of the students. Within a given class there are several ways the teacher can direct the reading activities to meet the individual needs of students. For example, total group reading allows for presentation of specific ideas or skills which students can share after reading and for full enjoyment and sharing of some types of literature, such as drama and poetry. Smaller groups can be used for developing sequential skills, with several students who are at approximately the same level helping each other. Small groups are also useful for students interested in the same topic or striving toward the same goal, whether the content be academic or nonacademic. Individual procedures are best for developing some skills, such as personal reading for pleasure, relaxation, or specific information. There are also various instructional skills packages designed to be used individually. Each of these approaches has its place in the classroom and can be used in all content areas. The key to successful use of the approaches, however, is careful teacher planning, administrating, and evaluating. References are included. (VJ)

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INDIVIDUALIZING READING INSTRUCTION AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL

A. Concept of Individualizing Reading Instruction

The term "individualized reading" usually denotes a specific type of reading approach or method of teaching. The topic under consideration, "Individualizing Reading Instruction at the Junior High Level," does not refer to this reading approach or method. It interprets the word literally as "to give individuality to," "to make individual in character," and "to adapt to the needs or special circumstances of an individual." However, since repeated references will be made to some aspects to the "individualized reading approach," the main characteristics of this broader concept of a teaching method will be reviewed. According to Frost these are: (7)

1. The teacher provides many books on many levels of difficulty, covering a wide range of interests - trade books, basals, reference books, etc.

2. The children select their own reading materials.

3. A regular period for free reading is established. During this period the teacher holds individual conferences or moves about the room to assist as needed.

4. Individual pupil-teacher conferences are planned on a regular basis and are short in duration.

5. Group instruction is provided on the basis of needs that are determined in conference. The membership of each group is fluid, and the duration of the group is short lived. When its function has been served, the group is dissolved.

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6. Careful records are kept by the teacher and the children.

7. Small groups are used for instructional purposes as well as for social and creative activities related to reading: sharing stories with classmates, audience reading of material familiar to the child, book activities - dramatics, shadow boxes, puppet shows - in connection with favorite stories.

A definition of individualization in reading which is somewhat less structured and, therefore, more appropriate to instruction at the junior high level is given by Carlton and Moore. (4)

> Individualized reading consists of providing freedom for the pupil to select, from a variety of sources in the classroom, materials which are interesting and challenging but which he can read without too much difficulty. Reading is not regarded as a distinct subject but as a tool to be used in all learning situations. Children are encouraged to select materials which are related to what they are studying in science, social studies, and many other fields.

Leland Jacobs suggests that individualized reading is not a single method, does not eliminate group discussion, but provides for opportunities for individual reading at one's own rate and one's own purpose or interest, and for the development of skills needed. (10)

The concept of individualized reading instruction has been utilized in the classrooms as a part of the reading program or as a supplement to the use of basal readers. Blakeley and McKay found that of 111 teachers using individualized reading, 88 or 79 percent were using it together with some other approach. (2)

Ruth Strang questioned the necessity of choosing between the individualized and the basal reading program. Instead she encouraged using the most effective aspects of any number of reading approaches. (15)

This broader concept of individualizing instruction, reading in this instance, emerged from the concepts expounded by Willard C. Olson in Child Development. (12) His terminology - "seeking, self-selection, and pacing" - synthesized the results of his studies of growth, behavior, and child development and has a familiar ring to most reading teachers. (13) "Seeking" is interpreted as the active exploration of one's environment; "self-selection" as the extractions from one's environment objects and experiences consistent with one's needs and maturational level; and "self-pacing" as a rate of development commensurate with one's maturity.

B. Need for Individualized Reading Instruction at the Junior High Level

The range of individual achievement of reading skills is common knowledge. By using the formula: Reading Expectancy = Years in school x I.Q. + 1, one arrives at variations of 5.4, 6.3, and 7.2 years in grades seven, eight, and nine.

Estimated Reading Expectancy

I.Q.	Reading Potential at Specific Grade Levels			
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
150	8.5	10.0	11.5	13.0
140	8.0	9.4	10.8	12.2
130	7.5	8.8	10.1	11.4
120	7.0	8.2	9.4	10.6
110	6.5	7.6	8.7	9.8
100	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0
90	5.5	6.4	7.3	8.2
80	5.0	5.8	6.6	7.4
70	4.5	5.2	5.9	6.6
60	4.0	4.6	5.2	5.8

However, it is apparent that many considerations other than intelligence are responsible for a still more extreme range of differentiation. Among these are physical and mental health, emotional and social development, immediate environment, the child's and parent's attitude toward reading and education, and his educational experiences to the present time. In actual practice wider ranges in reading achievement is indicated than the reading expectancy formula prodëces. Anderson and Dearborn list the following studies. (1)

A standardized reading test given to all sixth grade pupils of the elementary schools of a suburban school near Detroit resulted in a range of 7 years (Grades 3.5 to 10.5) and a mean of 6.4.

Subjects consisting of nearly 20,000 eighth grade pupils from New York City schools varied from below third grade to college reading level.

Karlin reports the results of the diagnostic Reading Test administered to ninth grade students as a range from grade 3 to grade 13 level with a mean of 8.0.

The author was associated with a study in which The California Reading Test was administered to over 600 seventh grade students. The results, in grade levels, indicated a range from 3.6 to 11.2 with a mean of 6.6.

In addition to the wide range of reading ability in any one grade level, the various skills in reading rarely develop in a uniform pattern within any one individual. Three sixth grade

students whose names followed each other in an alphabetical listing had achieved the same grade level for all practical considerations. Student A developed the reading scores measured in the test in a uniform pattern. Student B had successfully mastered the phonetic skills associated with word recognition but read at a very slow rate and lacked comprehension skills. Student C was a capable student with high comprehension ability, but lacked all phonetic word analysis skills, presumably because he had no need for them at the lower grade levels.

Bond and Tinker show the following scattergram based on Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test and Gates Reading Survey Level of Comprehension grade scores of 379 fifth-grade children. (3)

Intelligence Quotients	55-64	65-74	75-84	85-94	95-104	105-114	115-124	125-134	135-144	145-154
Reading Grades	Frequencies									
9.0 +							1	1		1
8.5-8.9						1	3	2	1	1
8.0-8.4						4	7	7	1	
7.5-7.9					2	6	2	4		
7.0-7.4				1	3	7	9	6	2	
6.5-6.9			1	1	8	11	7	4	2	1
6.0-6.4				3	8	9	15	2	1	
5.5-5.9				3	14	8	5			
5.0-5.4		1		11	16	8	7	1		
4.5-4.9		3	4	11	12	3	4	1		
4.0-4.4	1	2	12	12	9	3	1			
3.5-3.9	2	7	9	14	7	4	2			
3.0-3.4		2	9	10	4		1			
2.5-2.9		2	2	3	2					

C. Class Organization with Emphasis on Individualized Reading

Many teachers are concerned about the practicability of individualizing reading instruction. Hesitation to change from a traditional pattern with which one is comfortable or a fallacious concept of individualization as a patented procedure often cause such concern. An organizational plan and teaching procedures suggested in the following paragraphs illustrates in a limited way how the teaching of reading can be individualized.

CHART SHOWING CLASS ORGANIZATION FOR READING

I. Total Class

1. Initial Group Diagnosis

2. Total class discussions (Example: Content Subjects)
Presentation of new materials

3. Appreciation (Audience situation)
Enjoyment of story (Read by teacher or pupil(s); films, tapes; drama; introduction to literature or classics)
Current events (Also in interest groups)

4. Skills (Common new learnings)
Presentation of new skills and reviews of skills previously taught that are within understanding of most pupils

II. Skill Groups; Reading Achievement Levels

1. Instructional level (90 to 95% word recognition, 75% comprehension, appreciation level)

2. Importance of diagnosis and evaluation

3. Flexibility

4. Class organized for basal readers; phonetic or other skill development; special reading teacher; within-class ability grouping; Joplin Plan; team teaching; individualization

5. Special Needs (Temporary, until need is met)

III. Interest Groups

1. Purpose: To satisfy some purpose (pupils or subject content) within reading experience

2. Topical: Determined by interest or content
Research type study
Questions to be answered in science, mathematics, social studies, literature, etc.

3. Flexibility in grouping encouraged

4. Instructional materials at different reading levels

5. Demands considerable teacher competence and planning time

IV. Individualized Reading

1. Developmental
Self-seeking, self-selection, and self-pacing
Guided and detailed records kept
Teacher-student conferences
Instructional materials plentiful on varied reading levels and to meet various interests
Demands competent teacher and administrative skills in organization
Problem of class time

2. Recreational: personal and recreational reading

3. Skills, as required for individuals

4. Research reading

A teacher with this concept of individualization has the following characteristics, according to Harris: (8)

a. recognizes that learning to read is a continuous, cumulative accomplishment
b. is well-informed about reading skills
c. provides ample time for individual reading and various kinds of group reading
d. arranges for individual skills reading as well as for independent recreational reading
e. provides time for children to share their reading experiences
f. provides a varied, extensive collection of reading matter, including practice and self-testing materials

g. encourages the child to select reading matter that extends his growing edges
h. develops an adequate system of record keeping
i. utilizes appropriate evaluation procedures
j. makes appropriate arrangements for independent work for others while an individual is working with the teacher.

1. Total Group Reading

Group directed reading activities have a definite place in the instructional program. If one accepts Stauffer's emphasis that reading is a cognitive process (16), then a teacher must assume the responsibility of encouraging and guiding this process. The mind is set, curiousity is arroused, a hypothesis is made, a state of desire to read is established through group discussion before the reading takes place. A recognition of the type or framework of a selection aids comprehension; is it fiction or non-fiction, drama, short story, or textbook reading? What is the particular style of writing? Group discussions can make children aware of his and others' interpretations, of the advisability to re-read a portion to check the accuracy of one's reading or to convince others. "The aim is to provide the learner with a set of skills, over which he has control, and with which he can make judgments when he is reading and thinking in the privacy of his own closet." (16)

Other purposes for group activity are to stimulate appreciation-enjoyment of sharing a humorous or exciting plot, and to enjoy poetry and choral reading. Introduction to literature and classics offer opportunities. The presentation of specific skills new to the group and within the understanding of most pupils, as well as, review of skills previously taught may be done in total groups.

2. Skill Development in Smaller Groups

The development of sequential skills must be geared to the specific reading levels of the students (word recognition, use of dictionary, varied comprehension skills). Each student is diagnosed individually and instruction provided at his level. Several students who need approximately the same type of help or are reading at about the same level can be grouped for instruction. They are still receiving individualized instruction based on their specific need; individualized instruction is not necessarily interpreted as one-to-one instruction. Certain students can be grouped together for long periods of time. Even these groups should be flexible so that a student making greater progress than the others, or one not able to keep up with the others, may change groups. Other groups are organized temporarily to meet some specific need, such as learning to use the dictionary more efficiently, reviewing basic phonetics, and understanding the organization of paragraphs. Often one finds some of the more capable students together with less able readers in these groups.

3. Interest Groups

The development of reading skills represents a major, but not the only aspect of teaching reading. Students interested in the same topic or striving to achieve the same purpose may be grouped. The topics may be a science problem, a social studies topic, some aspect of mathematics, a special interest (sports, aviation, space age, Mexico, mechanics), or a preference of a certain type of reading (drama, western novels, historical novels, biography, short selections, etc.). These groups usually consist of students reading at different levels of ability; instructional materials is made

available on different reading levels. With the special interest as the motivating force, the members of these groups mutually support each other. Many teachers see an advantage rather than a hindrance in the different achievement levels of the members. These groups are flexible and change everytime a specific interest has been explored. An effective use of interest groups demands considerable teacher competence and planning time. This type of grouping is especially applicable to subjects other than "reading."

4. Individualized Development

Although the focus was on individual development throughout this discussion, there are certain procedures that are most efficiently developed alone. This would include much of the personal reading for specific information, for relaxation, or for enjoyment. This part of one's reading should definitely involve the principle of self-seeking, self-selection, self-pacing, and self-evaluation. (See individualized method in part A.) The Library becomes an essential resource center. The amount and type of reading done is limited only by time and reading skills. Research reading constitutes a part of this program.

Special instructional skills on various levels of achievement can be developed. Programmed materials may be utilized (Examples: Sullivan Materials; Behavioral Research Laboratories materials; Science Research Associates kits and other materials; Controlled Reading, Educational Developmental Laboratories). Various mechanical

devices can be made available to develop accuracy in oral reading (tape recorder) to increase rate of comprehension (pacers, tachistoscopes), to develop skills (teaching machines), and for many other purposes (film strip, slide, and movie projectors; radio, television, record players). Specific aspects of comprehension can be further developed such as reading for details, locating answers, drawing conclusions, getting the main ideas, and following directions (Specific Skills Series, Barnell Loft; Gates Peardon Reading Exercises; McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons). Most of the materials available is carefully graded so that each student can start at a comfortable level and progress at his own rate. Teacher-made materials are equally effective. Such materials as Nila Banton Smith's Be A Better Reader develops study skills for various subject areas on different levels of achievement. Readers Digest publishes the Reading Skill Builders that lend themselves admirably for individualized reading. Newspaper and magazine articles can be found on varying difficulty levels to meet almost all interests.

The individual or personal reading comprises a very basic part of the total reading program, not just supplementary reading. It is specifically planned for by the teacher; the student receives council and suggestions in student-teacher conferences; day by day evaluation is fundamental. It requires teacher competence in planning, organizing, encouraging, administering, and evaluating. It lends itself well to team-teaching and the use of special personnel such as reading specialist, librarian, etc., as well as the use of teacher aides. It represents the type of reading that should continue through life.

5. Application to All Subjects

In the content subjects the ability to read has a functional application. Much of what has been stated generally applies more specifically to reading in the various school subjects. Certainly there are many opportunities for total group participation, small group projects, and individual reading and research work in all subjects. Needs for the development of special skills become obvious. A lack of sufficient maturity in vocabulary development of a certain knowledge area, failing to comprehend a style of writing ---the exact terse statements of mathematics and science, the abstract concepts in social studies, the figurative language in literature --- represent weaknesses that must be overcome. Instructional materials of various types, including textbooks, must be made available at different reading levels. Skill development materials such as Smith's Be A Better Reader are directly slanted to the subject matter areas. Others develop the skills that are being applied in the subject matter areas in a general way, such as reading for details, drawing inferences, getting the main idea, following directions, skimming, reference work, and the like. The teacher of any content subject could develop materials for individual help for the specific skills directly related to her subject or strengthening a reading deficiency in the students. Special vocabulary drills, materials to develop concepts, exercises to encourage problematic thinking, and the like can be organized at various ability levels to meet almost any situation.

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